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PROPAGANDA

Battle of the disinformers

EVEN BY its own stormy standards, the United States Central Intelligence Agency has been having a rough passage in the last few weeks. Accusations, ranging in weight from the apparently ridiculous to the genuinely damaging, have been made that the Agency has fomented the Indo-Pakistani war, tried to bribe the Singapore Government, allowed its agents to become opium traders—and, most recently, mount a coup against Dr Soekarno during the current Indonesian turmoil.

Last week, the CIA replied to its critics with a report of some 5,500 words, published in the American Congressional Record. There is, according to the report, a special Russian Department of Disinformation (Department D), set up by the secret police (KGB), one of whose chief tasks is to discredit the CIA.

According to the report, the aim of the Department of Disinformation is a constant flow of anti-CIA books, pamphlets and newspaper articles (its output is estimated at "between 350 and 400 derogatory items annually"). Department D's attack is also directed against America's intelligence community "with particular thrust against the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover."

The report was introduced to Congress by a CIA spokesman, who said: "In the spy business we can't accuse the other man of not playing fair. But we want you to know what we're up against." The document professes a good deal of detail in its account of the Department of

Disinformation, which it says is headed by a long-service professional intelligence officer named General Ivan Ivanovich Agayants. His Department, also called Department D, is said to have been set up in 1959. (Agayants, then known as Avalov, had apparently served in France, "controlling" the French spy Georges Pasques, jailed for life in 1947.)

The CIA distinguishes between "Russian 'disinformation' ("dezinformatsiya") and "propaganda." Disinformation is said to have more "precision and bite." Agayants, they say, has 40 to 50 geographical and functional specialists in Moscow alone. His tasks are allegedly to:

1. Destroy the confidence of Congress and the US public in US personnel and agencies engaged in anti-communist activity;
2. Undermine American prestige and democratic institutions and denigrate American leadership with NATO governments; Sow distrust and create grounds for subversion and revolt against the US in

the Western Hemisphere and among new nations in Africa and Asia.

The picture which emerges is one of an operation which the KGB might well be running; and clearly the evidence of KGB participation in the preparation of Gordon Lonsdale's memoirs (See P. 1) dovetails neatly. A British Labour MP (not the MP mentioned in the Congressional Record) said last week that he had more than once been offered "material" for books about American intelligence by Russian acquaintances.

Further, the report (quoting a book by Ivan Vozny, a KGB officer who defected to the US), explains a favourite Department D technique at some length. This is to send articles from Moscow on microfilm to stations abroad, where they are translated into the local language, and placed in left or

articles.

This gives the article an appearance of legitimacy; it becomes "a sort of document." It is then transmitted back to Moscow for further re-transmission around the world. Although Department D is said to have ample resources for forgery, according to the report it prefers the "plant" technique.

Quotation

Its other main activity, said to be increasing, is the collection and quotation, sometimes out of context, of points made against the CIA in reputable Western journals and books. "This study," it says, "also has confirmed the deep interest of the Soviet services in the development and milking of Western journalists. Americans figure prominently among these."

Despite these passages of conviction, however, the CIA report is not a deeply impressive document. It seems likely that its publication has something to do with the publication last year of "The Invisible Government," a book by two top-ranking American journalists, David Wise and Thomas B. Ross—which included a detailed and damaging critique of CIA operations in Cuba, the South American continent, Burma and other situations (including, allegedly, the US Government's own Peace Corps).

Certainly, the Wise and Ross book (published here a month ago) is much longer than the Report; but it also maintains a more impressive level of documentation at many points. It seems surprising, in fact, that the resources of the premier US intelligence organisation cannot discover any more arresting examples than they do of a world-wide conspiracy of denigration.

The major heads amount to: a slanderous booklet called "CIA over Asia," published in Kanpur, India, 1962; the fact that newspapers in Tanzania, Greece and several Communist countries described Admiral Raborn's appointment to head the CIA this year as evidence of links between the military and industrial monopolists; a Press and radio attempt in Ghana, allegedly based on an

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